

Massimo Grimaldi

(Taranto, Italy, 1974)

“The need to rethink the basic utility of my role as an artist has led me to collaborate with Emergency, an independent and neutral Italian association that was established in 1994 to offer free, high-quality medical-surgical assistance to civilian victims of war, anti-personnel mines, and poverty. For some time now I have systematically proposed to private collectors and institutions that they assign most of the prize money I have won to Emergency, to support the activity of its medical facilities, which consequently became the subject of photographic reportage.” This is how Massimo Grimaldi describes a series of projects that includes *Emergency’s Paediatric Centre in Goderich, Photos Shown on Two Apple iMac Core i3s*, 2010—his winning competition entry for the 2009 Fellowship for Young Italian Artists, awarded by Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea. Raising important questions regarding the art system and a sense of ethical responsibility through personal commitment, Grimaldi’s project called for a series of phases, beginning with his very decision to compete for the artist’s prize that is announced annually by Castello di Rivoli and sponsored by the museum’s Friends and Supporters.

With this project, once Grimaldi won the competition he had most of the prize money assigned directly to Emergency, which utilized it to acquire medicines and medical materials for the Paediatric Centre in Goderich, Sierra Leone. Similar to other works created according to this procedure, Grimaldi later used what remained of the prize money to travel personally to Goderich. Living in contact with the young patients, the artist created what he calls “an affective reportage,” a series of photographs and videos that, in fragments and respecting the privacy of the people portrayed, describes daily life within the hospital. In the work in collection the images the artist has collected are shown on two Macintosh computer screens. In this case, as well as other works in the series, the artist specifies the use of the Cupertino company’s most advanced models available at the time of the work’s creation, and this decision becomes an integral part of the work. The juxtaposition between a Western high-tech computer vehicle and the documentation it contains—Sierra Leone has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world—raises questions that one cannot ignore and that do not fail to anchor the experience of the viewer to a precise place and time. According to the artist his work therefore consists in the totality of this long cause-and-effect chain that, through help and medicines for the children in Goderich, results in the dissemination of images in museums in other parts of the world and pertinent reactions on the part of visitors. The art system, the value that it attributes to images, but also their distance from the complexity of reality are themes that characterize all the artist’s research. In other types of works, always produced in a single copy, Grimaldi insists on the arbitrary nature of the tie between image and meaning. In certain performances, for example, he asks friends or acquaintances to pause next to abstract digital prints, often leaning against them, thereby creating ambiguous pseudo-portraits in which the performer and the viewer share the experience of always being “in front of” the images and never “inside them,” in a continuous condition of doubt. (MB)